



## **SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY CONGRESS**

Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress  
Journal of the South Indian History Congress since 1981  
ISSN No.: 2229-3671  
UGC CARE Listed Journal

---

### **Nattar and the Socio-Economic Changes in Tiruvendipuram A.D. 1700-1900**

Author(s): V. Palanichamy

Source: Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress 29(2009), pp. 305-308

Stable URL: [http://journal.southindianhistorycongress.org/journals/articles/2009/SIHC\\_2009\\_V29\\_116.pdf](http://journal.southindianhistorycongress.org/journals/articles/2009/SIHC_2009_V29_116.pdf)

Published By: South Indian History Congress

---

© 2022 South Indian History Congress. All rights reserved.

## NATTAR AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES IN TIRUVENDIPURAM A.D. 1700-1900

V. Palanichamy

In the initial stage of the colonial rule in South India in the late eighteenth century the British administrators found the people called Nattar in some parts of their newly acquired areas. Nattars were mostly found in the districts of Chingleput, South Arcot, North Arcot, and Tiruchirappalli districts in the present Tamil Nadu State. It is doubtless those administrators did not have sufficient knowledge about the origin and the nature of the Nattars whom they came across in the various stages in the course of enforcing colonial rule. Due to the lack of information about Nattar, each of the British administrators posted in the different parts of South India judged and treated them differently according to the local condition in the early days of their rule. In some cases they treated Nattar as revenue officer, Zamindar, Caste headman, others they simply or purposely neglected Nattar. A few scholars studied the role of Nattar during the Chola and Vijayanagara period. According to Y. Subbarayalu,<sup>1</sup> nadu was the groupings of agricultural settlements formed by natural factors conducive to agriculture, and each nadu was basically a cohesive group of agricultural people tied together by marriage and blood relationships. The people who occupied the dominant position in each nadu were Nattars. Subbarayalu states that among the group members in the nadu assembly, Nattars, being the representatives of the villages of agricultural landholders (vellanvagai) and being the prime landholders in the respective nadu, presented themselves as the chief spokesmen of the people in the region.<sup>2</sup>

Their inherent influential position was well recognized by all rulers at the time, which he argues is evinced by the inscriptional evidences showing that only the Nattars had the final authority to endorse the royal grants of land,<sup>3</sup> during the time of Cholas the

Nattars acted collectively without having heads. Their functions were mostly comprised of those relating to temple management and revenue matters. Stein uses the term, segmentary state, to describe that in this state the scope of the constituent units was limited to well-defined and persistent ethnic territories or Nadus. The chiefs of the nadu were Nattars, who were the leaders or spokesmen of the dominant ethnic groups within it. There the Nattars were the ruling class with the power and authority to manage resources, and were differentiated from other people in many ways.<sup>4</sup> The establishment of the Vijayanagara rule, which was entirely different from that of the earlier periods in the sense the rulers were foreign invaders coming from outside Tamil country. The area had to incorporate heterogeneous factors. In the new agrarian situation Nattars were also subject to significant changes. The changing position of Nattars in the Vijayanagara period and their situation in the period just before the British period will be elucidated here. They were deeply involved with the colonial administration, which itself is the indication of the continuity of the institution well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nattars played a vital role for collecting the revenue; they became the revenue renters in the region of Tiruvendipuram.

### Nattars' Privileges Abolished in 1768

In January 1768 the President and Council ordered the abolishment of the rights and privileges of the Nattars. The privileges which had been enjoyed by them, it seemed landlord rent from the lands cultivated by either Ulukudi or parakudi 10 per cent of produce from the paddy lands watered from the rivers, eries, and tanks and cultivated by either the ulukudis or parakudis, 10 per cent of the amount of the rents from the lands rented by either the ulukudis or parakudies on fixed rent. The higher allowance (waram) in the crops from the lands cultivated by

nattars and 50 per cent of produce was enjoyed by themselves and two-thirds of produce from the paddy lands watered by the use of the Pecotas (a big water lift) from wells for the share among the ulucudis or paracudis. They were enjoyed the privileges fees on all the goods upon which Juncans are levied and inam (maniam) lands were enjoyed by themselves.<sup>5</sup> The immediate reason of the direction of abolishing the privileges was the frequent transfers of land rights in the area, which had troubled the newly appointed renter to a great extent.

### **Revival of Privileges by Nattars**

Some time before the Tiruvendipuram Report was prepared, the Nattars had submitted a petition to the Chief at Cuddalore requesting the revival of their ancient privileges. The summary of the petition is recorded in the Report. It seems they could produce certificates proving their long enjoyed privileges. By producing the cowels from the Amuldars of the Nabob government, and from Governor Saunders and the Council of Fort St. David in 1750, the Nattars requested at least the restoration of their former above said privileges. It is to be remembered that they had enjoyed their privileges despite the order of 1768. Their request here should be understood as the demand of reconfirmation of their long established privileges. On receiving this report, the committee of Revenue recommended the grant of the Nattars' former privileges and ordered acquainted the renter and the Nattar of Tiruvendipuram that the following privileges such as 1) the allowance of 50 per cent on the produce of those lands cultivated by them in share that are watered by water courses from the rivers, eries, and tanks, 2) 25 per cent deduction in the rent of those paddy and small grain lands cultivated by them on rent, 3) their former customary fees on all the goods on which Juncans are collected, and 4) their inam lands in each village specified in the accounts, and the corresponding to those privileges are to be restored to the Nattars.<sup>6</sup> In restoring the privileges to the Nattars, the Board of Fort St. George directed that all the Shrotriums or Inams granted since 1750 and those without proper authority should be taken away.<sup>7</sup> On 9<sup>th</sup> February

1799 their privileges were again temporarily abolished. The reason of this change is not known at the moment. Previously the war of 1780 this small territory was in a highly cultivated and flourishing condition, the population was high. The lands completely cultivated and its commerce and manufactures extensive and valuable. But it suffered much during the war in 1784. The country presented a scene bordering on dissolution. The inhabitants had either perished or emigrated, and the villages were mostly in ruins.<sup>8</sup> Five villages were held on favourable rent by the Poligar and one was an agragaram held by certain on the same tenure. There were two villages like Chinnammanaikenpalaiyam and Naiduput added by the Nabob in 1762. Generally called the Jaghir villages and always rented separately from the Tiruvendipuram estate, but then included by Mr. Fallofield as one of the estates into which that district has been divided. Since the abolishment of the Nattars' privileges in 1799, Nattars seemed to have requested the Board for their reinstatement to their office and the privileges thereof. In December 1785 the President and Council decided to reestablish the office of Nattar.

The highest produce of the farm of Tiruvendipuram during a period of nine years was according to the report of the chief and council of Cuddalore in 1775 was 15,175 star pagodas 41 fanam and 44 cash, and the lowest produce was 11,811 star pagodas 7 fanam and 13 cash. It might be accepted that the taluk suffered equally with that of Cuddalore from the effects of the War of 1780. It seems however to have nearly received its usual prosperity for Mr. Fallofield has been remarked that there appeared very little ground remaining that could be brought into cultivation. The permanent rent proposed for the estate of Tiruvendipuram was more moderate than that proposed for Cuddalore. It was considering therefore the advantages of situation, and the improvement both Tiruvendipuram and Cuddalore were susceptible of under the proprietary tenure from the cultivation of the more valuable article. The Collector recommended that the amount of star pagodas 9,800 be declared the permanent jumma of the six estates of Tiruvendipuram.

### **The role of the Nattars of Tiruvendipuram**

The Nattars of Tiruvendipuram played a vital role for the religious, social, economic, and commercial activities. They were served for the religious and ritual ceremonies, collecting the revenue taxes from their agents or cultivating castes. These taxes were paid to the government shares, remaining the revenue tax they were enjoyed by themselves. The only evidence about the commercial activity of Nattars is the involvement of the head weavers called 'Nattars' in the company's procurement of cotton goods in the Jagir. It was as follows:

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1772 Hastings, who was at the time export Warehousekeeper, planned and enforced new system of procuring cotton piece-goods. In the new system the investment was to be done through Gomastahs (agents) to the weavers instead of through merchants. The Nattars along with the brokers were to act as mediators between the Gomastahs and the weavers while receiving the commission from the Company. There was another important change of policy in November 1772, in which the brokers were abolished and the head weavers or Nattars were appointed to manage the business. The allowance was 1 ½ per cent. It was also regulated that instead of keeping an account with each weaver and making advances to him on the spot as he delivered his cloth. The Nattars were made responsible to the Company and the weavers in general to them. What Hastings expected from Nattars by this change was to become security for the weavers, in which, however, they appears to have no interest because the head weavers or Nattars as protectors of the weavers in general were a kind of check on the Gomastahs and brokers and were not immediately interested in the investment themselves.<sup>9</sup> As a result, a large amount of bad debt was left. The Board finally resolved that the loom owners were to receive the advance of thread and money from the Gomastahs on the spot excluding the Nattars.

The Nattars had enjoyed all kinds of privileges in Tiruvendipuram estate in South Arcot

district. They had been in a good position and power in the society for acting the religious ritual ceremonies, judicial and commercial activities. The Nattars collected land rent from the cultivating groups and also collected house rent from the villagers during the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Later they had relationship with the British Government for getting land rent for cultivation and also bringing the cotton looms for weaving on contract basis. They were landholders of the government share; the British government provided such kind of privileges of village lease or land lease for Nattars sharing the land rent for agricultural cultivation. They were used the Government water from the rivers, eries, and tanks for their nanjai and punjai land cultivation. Besides they were collected land tax from the cultivators, commercial tax and also collected tax on looms from the weavers. Apart from these privileges they were involved the religious ritual and judicial, commercial activities. Mostly they were involved on the trading contact for collecting the commercial tax on the commercial goods like weaving cloth. A large amount of grain was transferred from rural area to urban centers for the consumption of urban dwellers, who were predominantly engaged in non-agricultural occupation, the urban towns which were growing rapidly in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Weavers mostly employed in the Government Company, when the Nattars got a head weaver position for distributing the cotton looms to weavers. The private weavers could not pay the weaving tax to Government during the time. The British has been given a tax remission for the company weavers. The head weavers brought all kinds of looms and cotton cloth for weaving and dying purpose. Nattars were involved in the caste disputes between right hand and left hand caste, these type of caste conflict finally came to an end with the judgment of the Court of Law. Nattars and other local leaders found the change to increase their economic power in the participation in grain trade, which enabled them to maintain their followers and to control the local society.

## REFERENCES

1. Y. Subbarayalu, *Political Geography of the Chola Country, Madras, 1973, pp.32-22, 36, & 96.*
2. *Ibid.*, pp.33-34, pp.39-40.
3. *Ibid.*, pp.41, 96-97.
4. Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, Oxford University Press, 1980, pp.7 & 131.*
5. Mizushima Tsukasa, *Nattars and the Socio-Economic Changes in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia & Africa, 1986, p.71.*
6. *As to the village-wise privileges of the Nattars thus restored in 1775, see Extract from the Minutes of the Cuddalore Consultations, 27.8.1775, in Board of Revenue Proceedings, 28.4.1806.*
7. *Madras Revenue Proceedings, 12.7.1775, Letter to the Committee of Revenue, 28.7.1775, in Board of Revenue Proceedings, 28.4.1806. Extract from the minutes of the Cuddalore Consultations, 30.8.1775. See also Mizushima Tsukasa, op.cit., p.74.*
8. *South Arcot District Record, vol. 187, 30 January 1806, p.15.*
9. Mizushima Tsukasa, *op.cit.*, p.132.

## STUDENT ROLE IN ANTI HINDI AGITATION - 1965

### R.Christal Jeeva

The Central administration decided to implement Hindi as national language in the states on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1965. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhaga Leaders held an anti - Hindi conference at Tevar Hall, Trichi on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1965. During that Conference P.T. Rajan and G.T. Naidu condemned the language policy of the Central Government.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1965, The Hindi Sahithya Sammelanam celebrated the 'Hindi day'.<sup>2</sup> Also Parliament and Ministry sent a circular with instruction to communicate with states through Hindi. Dravida Munnetra Kazhaga leaders decided to observe the Republic day on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1965 as a 'sad day' by wearing black badges.<sup>3</sup>

On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1965 students of Madurai colleges held an anti Hindi conference at Thiyagarajar college Hostel. The important students were Kalimuthu, Kamarasu, Jeyaprakasam from Thiyagarajar college, Sasi, Rajendran, Ramasamy from Madhura College, Gandhi from Engineering college,

Subramanian from American college and other college students.<sup>4</sup> They decided to observe 26<sup>th</sup> January 1965 as a sad day. During that day, students by dragging the effigy of Hindi, reached Rajaji park. Kalimuthu and Kamarasu from Thiyagarajar college burnt the 17<sup>th</sup> section of the constitution.<sup>5</sup> They led a procession through the four Masi streets of Madurai by raising anti - Hindi slogans. More than 10,000 students who had participated in this procession turned violent on an encounter which occurred in front of the Congress office between Congressites and students.<sup>6</sup> To control the situation the police burst teargas shell and opened fire on the crowd. In Madras, students of the Law College, Engineering College and Arts College burnt the effigy of Hindi at Napier's park and went in procession to secretariat to see the Chief Minister but they were refused. Among them the prominent were Ravichandran, Navalana, Seenivasan, and Durai Pandian from the Colleges of Madras.<sup>7</sup> Students organized anti - Hindi processions